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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/576,233

01/12/2007

Peter Mueller

1401A.006 (CI0133/A-US)

7089

25215 7590 09/16/2010
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EXAMINER

NGUYEN, PHONG H

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3724

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

09/16/2010

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claims 24, 26, 27 and 31-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by WO 00/59689.

Regarding claims 24 and 26, WO 00/59689 teaches a method for simultaneously slicing at least two food product blocks 1 comprising:

feeding in parallel two food product blocks 1 to a blade 10;

inserting each of the two food product blocks 1 into a feed passage 21, wherein the two food product blocks are brought into contact with a limit stop 22;

conveying the two food product blocks 1 by a conveying means 38;

slicing first ends of the two food product blocks 1; and

connecting a means 36 to second ends of the two food product blocks 1.

See Figs. 1, 3 and 5.

Regarding the last two lines of claim 26, WO 00/59689 teaches the means 36 being driven by the conveying means 38.

Regarding claim 27, see Fig. 1.

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Regarding claim 31, means 36 being removed from the feed passage (going back to element 33) is best seen in Fig. 1.

Regarding claim 32, it is inherent that when the end of the food block reaches the blade, the connection between the food block and means 36 is broken.

Regarding claim 33, motor 37 for driving means 36 is best seen in Fig. 1.

Regarding claim 34, a conveying means 38 is best seen in Fig. 3.

Regarding claim 35, see Fig. 1.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 29 and 49-51 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 00/59689 in view of FR 2 677 573.

Regarding claims 29 and 49, WO 00/59689 teaches the invention substantially as claimed except for a locking device for fastening the food product block to the means 36.

FR 2 677 573 teaches a locking device 22 for fastening the food product block to a means. See Fig. 1.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to provide a locking device as taught by FR 2 677 573 to the means 36 for fastening the food product block to the means.

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Regarding claims 47 and 50, the means is driving by a conveying means 38 is best seen in Fig. 3.

Regarding claims 48 and 51, a conveying means 38 is best seen in Fig. 3.

5. Claims 24, 26, 27, 29, 31-35 and 47-55 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 00/59689 in view of Lindee et al. (6,935,215), herein Lindee.

Regarding claims 24, 26 and 55, WO 00/59689 teaches a method for simultaneously slicing at least two food product blocks 1 comprising:

feeding in parallel two food product blocks 1 to a blade 10;

inserting each of the two food product blocks 1 into a feed passage 21, wherein the two food product blocks are brought into contact with a limit stop 22;

slicing first ends of the two food product blocks 1; and

connecting a means 36 to second ends of the two food product blocks 1.

See Figs. 1, 3 and 5.

WO 00/59689 does not teach conveying the two food product blocks 1 by a conveying means 38.

Lindee teaches conveying food product block by conveying means (20, 22, 24, 26). See Fig. 1.

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate the step of conveying the food blocks by a conveying means to convey the food product block to a cutting blade.

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It is to be noted that the limitation of driving the gripper by using one conveyor belt, one food product block or both in claim 55 cannot be commented on at this time in view of 35 USC 112 issues.

Regarding claim 27, see Fig. 1 in WO 00/59689.

Regarding claim 31, means 36 being removed from the feed passage (going back to element 33) is best seen in Fig. 1 in WO 00/59689.

Regarding claim 32, it is inherent that when the end of the food block reaches the blade, the connection between the food block and means 36 is broken.

Regarding claim 33, motor 37 for driving means 36 is best seen in Fig. 1 in WO 00/59689.

Regarding claim 34, a conveying means is best seen in Fig. 1 in Lindee.

Regarding claim 35, see Fig. 1 in WO 00/59689.

Regarding claims 47 and 50, patentability of claims 47 and 50 cannot be commented on at this time in view of 35 USC 112 issues.

Regarding claim 48 and 51, when the means goes through the conveying means, the means engages with the conveying means.

Regarding claims 52-54, see Fig. 1 in Lindee.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 24, 26 and 55 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

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7. Applicant's arguments with respect to the objection to the Specification and the rejection of claims 26 and 55 under 35 USC 112 have been fully considered and are persuasive. The objection to the Specification and the rejection of claims 26 and 55 under 35 USC 112 have been withdrawn.

8. Applicant's arguments with respect to the rejection under 35 USC 102 and 103 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Regarding the Applicant's argument with respect to claim 24 that WO 00/59689 does not teach connecting a means to an end of the food product and the contact between the food product and the means occurring during slicing, the Applicant is directed to Fig. 1 in WO 00/59689. The lower left ends of the food product are cut by the blade 10 and the upper right ends of the food product are connected to a means 36.

Regarding the Applicant's argument with respect to claim 26, element 38 is a conveying means for conveying the food product towards the blade 10. During the process of conveying the food product towards the blade 10 for slicing (which meets the limitation "at any desired time"), the contact between the means and the food product occurs. Furthermore, the Applicant is noted that claim 26 calls for the means (gripper) being driven by the food product OR the conveying means OR both. In this case, the means 36 is driven by the conveying means 38.

Conclusion

9. Applicant's amendment dated 09/23/2009 and 03/23/2010 necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.**

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See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

10. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to PHONG H. NGUYEN whose telephone number is (571)272-4510. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Boyer Ashley can be reached on 571-272-4502. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would

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like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Phong H Nguyen/

Examiner, Art Unit 3724

September 13, 2010